

# STAND FIRM AGAINST RACISM

No 26

July 1981

DESPITE THE REGRETTABLE INCREASE IN VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN OUR AREA OVER THE LAST YEAR OR SO, MANY LOCAL PEOPLE WERE THOROUGHLY SHOCKED BY THE RACIST MURDER IN HEARSALL LAST MONTH.

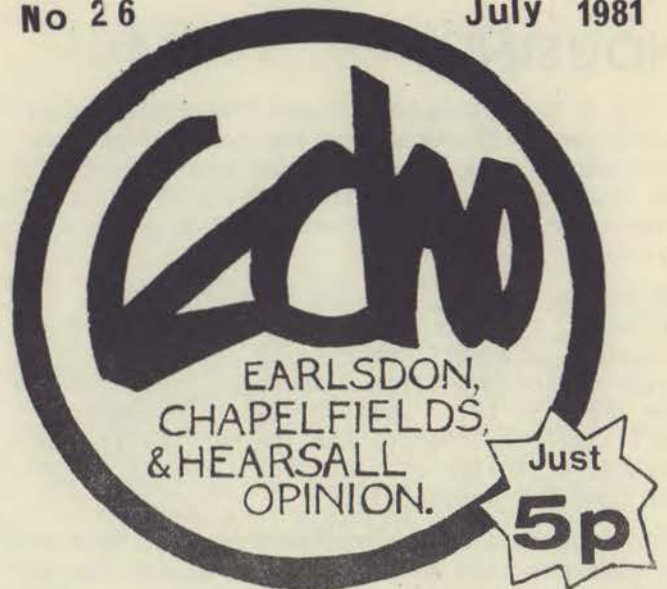
The murder of Amal Dharry, a much-liked and well respected local doctor, in Broomfield Road, has given a focus to the growing anti-racist feelings both in the Hearsall area and in Coventry as a whole. The question is: how do we harness and develop these feelings, to stop racist attacks and to stamp out racism?

There are a number of approaches which can be adopted. Firstly, the reality of what is happening in Coventry has to be made clear and explained. Secondly, a campaign against racism has to be built up. And thirdly, a number of myths about non-white people which are spread and exploited by the three main fascist organisations in Coventry (National Front, New National Front and British Movement) must be shown to be false.

As regards the facts about the present situation Coventry is NOT the violent and dangerous city that has been described recently in the national press. It would be particularly wrong to describe Earlsdon and Hearsall as an unsafe or violent area - that is why Dr. Dharry's murder has caused so much shock and outrage. Nonetheless, there are many members of the Asian community who are afraid to go out now, especially at night. We spoke to one family who have lived happily in Hearsall for fourteen years, who stressed that it is only in the last few months that they have felt threatened or afraid.

There are racist slogans daubed on walls in the area and there is no doubt that the fascist organisations are gaining in strength. There has also been concern that Coventry police have not been taking this threat seriously enough - articles very critical of local police attitudes have recently appeared in the 'New Statesman' and in 'Coventry News'.

Now, however, an anti-racist campaign is gathering strength. It is spearheaded by the Coventry Committee Against Racism (tel: 87876), who organised the huge demonstration on 23rd May. Other Asian defence groups have been formed. The Labour Party (belatedly) is involving itself in the struggle, as are some of the local rock groups, notably the Specials. Public meetings are raising support - for example, the 'Stand Firm Against Racism in Hearsall' meeting on 24th June (reported on page 5), the meeting on 'Racism in Coventry Today - the Fight Against It' at the Lanchester Polytechnic on 29th June, and the call for a 'day of action' against racism on



3rd July.

It is particularly important that the distribution of racist and fascist material in and outside schools is stopped. It is also important that a newspaper campaign against racism be sustained. In this, E.C.H.O. will play its part. It has been suggested in a number of quarters that the Evening Telegraph has not been doing enough along these lines. The struggle must also be taken up and supported by city and county councils, and we welcome the initiative that Kris Sharma (whose constituency includes Chapelfields and Whoberley) proposes to take in involving the West Midlands County Council in the problem.

The myths which are spread and exploited by fascist organisations relate mainly to the idea that unemployment in Britain is made worse or even caused by the presence of black people; that blacks are in some way 'stealing' jobs which ought to go to whites. This stupid, simplistic view ignores both the fact that the people who are suffering most from unemployment in

(continued on page 5)



*Aching Tongues performing at the Butts concert for racial harmony on 20th June. The concert was not very well attended, largely because of exaggerated fears of trouble. In the event it was peaceful and residents' fears of violence in the surrounding area were not realised. (See our editorial on page 7).*



# HOUSING

E.C.H.O. has already featured the activities of the Coventry Churches Housing Association in past issues, and we again draw your attention to the organisation as the Butts site nears completion, and a new development is being planned.

According to their Housing Manager, Stuart Ferguson, the Butts site should be finished in November, and will comprise 53 units of various types of accommodation. There will be 35 units for the elderly, 3 small houses for single parent families, 3 units for the physically handicapped, a cluster of flats for students/nurses, and some 1-3 person flats.

When this development is finished, the CCHA will be concentrating on providing homes for the elderly. Their surveys show that Earlsdon has a large number of elderly owner-occupiers who have large houses which have become a problem for them to maintain. Such people do not qualify for council rented accommodation, and in any case do not want to lose the value of their property. The CCHA's answer to this problem is a community leasehold scheme in which more suitable accommodation for the elderly is provided, and those interested buy a proportion of the equity (e.g. 70%). In other words, they own 70% of the value of the new property, and their investment grows as the value of the property does. The advantages are that the property is purpose designed for the elderly, and the CCHA are responsible for the maintenance. Also, there will generally be some savings left over from the sale of the old family home. A small rent is paid for the 30% that is not owned.

When one of the CCHA properties is no longer in use, it is sold back to the CCHA for 70% of its current market value, and they sell it for the same amount to another elderly person or couple.

There has been a great deal of local interest in the CCHA's proposed development of community leasehold accommodation at 39 Belvedere Road. Originally there were to have been 9 flats, plus another let to a responsible person at a fair rent to look out for the welfare of the other residents. 5 flats would have been in the existing house, one in a new small bungalow in the garden and 4 in a new two-storey development. However, neighbours objected and raised a petition and the Planning Committee refused permission for the development, claiming that it would be an over-intensive use of the site and would spoil the views of neighbours. The CCHA have told E.C.H.O. that they are now assessing whether the scheme can go ahead at all - i.e. whether it is viable within the constraints imposed by the City Council. It is quite likely that the many elderly local people who saw the scheme as a way of easing the financial and physical burdens of their accommodation while being able to stay in the area will be disappointed.

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# SPOTLIGHT

## HARRY WESTON <sup>3</sup>

In his lifetime Harry Weston, known by many as 'Mr. Coventry', has seen Earlsdon change from a village to a part of Coventry city - but as he says, "we still think of it as a village". He was born in 1896, just after Albany Road was built. He has a remarkable memory for people and reminisces about the famous people that lived in this area when he was young. Most notably he knew 'Ma Cooper'. He and the other children used to run errands for her when they were at Earlsdon School, and she always gave them an apple or something in return. He recalls her as a tyrant, well able to keep order in the pub she managed: "She would sit there where she could see everyone coming in and would refuse to let him in if she didn't like the look of him". It is understandable why he is known as Mr. Coventry. He is proud to say he was born in Clarendon Street within the sound of the Harrington bells, a famous firm of bellmakers. Not only has he lived his long life in the city but somehow his life epitomises so much of the life of the city over the years. Coventry is an engineering city and Harry left school at fourteen to be an apprentice at Alfred Herbert's, for five shillings for a 54 hour week. Although he is too modest to admit it outright, his ability and directness won him a lot of respect, and when in 1920 he wanted to start his own company Herbert's did not want to lose him. They refused to let him rent part of the factory, so he set up in Spon End first of all dealing in secondhand machinery. With hard work and his enterprising nature he built it up into a successful company which paid 20% for 20 years to its shareholders. In 1955 it was taken over and he started a new company. This company, Machine Tools Engineering Ltd. is in Lythalls Lane, and he still keeps his finger on the pulse. He has decided it is time now for him to phase out, but until he had a serious operation ten weeks ago he was still going to work every day, and he intends to return to work two or three hours a day. He has some exciting stories of his business life, such as when he bought up machine tools in Belgium just before war broke out. He has a

basic trust in people, so he has made many friends, but he has also been badly let down. He has enjoyed his whole life, but he says the happiest year of his life was when he was Lord Mayor in 1952, and this he is probably most remembered for; the first thing I noticed when I visited him at home was the framed 'Vote of Thanks', and he is very proud to display it. He does not see himself as a politician but was drawn into it, and the Mayoral year was the highlight. He enjoyed the pageantry, but more importantly he always had time for anyone. He has the capacity for keeping in touch with people over the years. Every Christmas since he was Mayor he has been sent a box of 'Godiva chocolates' from Belgium. Recently he was visited by the person who was maid to his family before the Blitz. Wherever he goes he is recognised, and he has a friendly word for everyone.



Harry (left) with Douglas Bader and Rev. Knight of St. Barbara's Church a few years ago.

He has been involved in many clubs and organisations over the years and is a founder chairman of the Canine Fund and a founder president of the Enterprise Club for the Disabled, not to mention a sponsor of E.C.H.O. He is also still involved with General Municipal Charities, the Small Bore Rifle Club, the Avenue Bowling Club and Gosford Athletics Club. Because of his zest for life it is hard to believe he is aged 85 and still convalescing. He will listen to anyone's problems and visits the sick. He would talk for hours to anyone if needed. His present home is in Styvechale Avenue in a ground floor maisonette of two he had built. His home companion, who is an old friend, lives upstairs. This is an instance of how he tackled his own problems after he lost his wife and found an enterprising solution. He has a daughter who lives in Woodside Avenue, and two grandchildren.

He has lived through a time of many dramatic changes, and he says that "the development of electricity is the most important, as it has a thousand and one uses, even to taking man to the moon and making humdrum duties in the home pleasurable, but especially as it has helped communication between people, such as through the telephone". This helps him now to keep in touch, and it is easy to see with his warmth and vitality why he has made friends of so many.

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# children on earlsdon

Some children at Earlsdon School have written about their life in Earlsdon. Here are some of their comments.

Stephen Whitehead begins: "I've been living in Earlsdon for three years now, but has anything really exciting happened? No." . . . . Perhaps not, but he does admit there are a lot of facilities he uses. The variety of shops in Earlsdon is mentioned by many children, and especially picked out is the new Co-op (for their mums). I am not sure everyone would agree with Liam Nelan who says "I think they should start building at least two more like it", in fact Stephen "can think of about ten things which could be improved", and according to Anna Hill "my mum says (it) is a bit expensive". The shop which is the favourite among the children is Discount Records. Matthew Partridge says "Before Discount Records opened we had to go up into town . . . (it is quite helpful really because of the fighting in town now".

Other children mention the violence, and are glad there is not much vandalism in Earlsdon. This is one of the reasons they all agree they would like more facilities in the area so that they do not have to travel. A local cinema is called for, but even more important for the children is a local swimming pool and riding stables. Tim Fryer says "I would like a swimming pool in Earlsdon so when it is a miserable day people could enjoy themselves", and Liam says "I think a . . . riding stables in Earlsdon would be a good idea, because children in Earlsdon . . . who want to go riding have to go to Meriden". Anna is concerned that "Disabled people should be allowed to learn" in a riding school in Earlsdon.

## BITS 'N' PIECES

We are pleased to report that trainees from Greyfriars Community Enterprise have recently cleaned the graffiti off the toilets and changing rooms on Hearsall Common.

\* \* \* \*

4th July is International Co-operative Day, and local co-operators will be gathering for the Coventry and District Co-op Fete at the Co-op Sports Club in Tile Hill Lane.

\* \* \* \*

New County Councillor for Coventry N.W., Kris Sharma, has taken out a subscription to E.C.H.O. We hope this will not only give him some interesting reading on local affairs, but will also give us the chance to make local feelings known on West Midlands County Council.

\* \* \* \*

The first full meeting of the new County Council will be on 13th July. We trust that the implementation of their manifesto pledges on transport will be on the agenda - and we shall be watching to see when improvements to the No.1 service are to be introduced.

The local parks are very important to the children and are well liked, but there is a call for better football fields and an adventure playground. Philippa Hurdman has a novel suggestion: "I would be glad to have (an adventure playground) in place of the City Arms pub" but perhaps it would be simpler to build one in one of the parks?

Activities at the churches also concern the children. Alexis Ferguson tells us "I like living in Earlsdon because it's got most things . . . It's even got two cub packs". There is also praise for the youth clubs in the area. Fortunately the children seem to like their school. Gaynor Frisby says "I . . . like living in Earlsdon because my house is near the school and I like the school" and Anna, together with some others, praises the library: "The Public Library is handy next to Earlsdon School because you can just pop in to get the books you want then go home and do what you want". But there is criticism from Haydn Shick: "I would like a playing field instead of the hard concrete but obviously the school can't afford it".

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## LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 15th July, Planning Committee will be considering a planning application relating to the fire-damaged site at 67 Earlsdon Avenue. The application is for residential development, for which the site is zoned. There would be 2-, 3- and 4-person flats with garaging.

We are pleased to see that the derelict piece of land on the corner of Highland Road/Earlsdon Avenue North is at last being put to good use. Mr. D. Johnson, who owns the site and runs his own building firm, is building a two-storey development of four bedsitting flats for sale, with a parking area for three cars.

During July, City Council Committees will be considering a report on the footpath from Westwood Road to Albany Road. The footpath is in an atrocious condition and the report requests the Committee to authorise improvement work to start.

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# RACISM: COMMUNITY RESPONSE

5

He'd just been for a drink with his mates and they were standing outside the pub, chatting. Suddenly, somebody swore at them from behind. He turned round and saw a knife being pulled out. One of his friends was stabbed.

Raj was describing to a tense meeting of about a hundred people how his friend became another victim of racist violence in Coventry. The meeting, at the Technical College Refectory on 24th June, had been arranged in order to hear about the current situation locally and to discuss what could be done about it.

First, people discussed the causes. Raj had heard accusations that black people cause unemployment; blacks are made a scapegoat for the recession. A spokesman for Covwar (Coventry Workers Against Racism) said that it was not just feelings about unemployment; there was also inbred nationalism. The Secretary of the Indian Workers' Association took this a stage further and said that nationalism is embedded into the laws of the State - "measures like the Nationality Bill are bound to increase alienation between different groups."

A man from City Engineers told of a skinhead attack on a black road-sweeper. His fellow workers were angry at first, seeing it as an attack on themselves, but a few hours later they had slipped back into the prejudices people use in everyday conversation. "It's not just a mad, young, desperate generation - they are getting these myths and prejudices from their parents", he said.

Derek Janes agreed, saying that unthinking racism is widespread in the community. "Skinheads are only the tip of the iceberg of racism; it will wither if there is no support for it from the community."

Then a number of positive ideas for practical action in Coventry in general and Earlsdon in particular were put forward:

- Counteracting racism in schools through anti-racist education and by children organising themselves to take action against infiltration. A constant effort was needed to promote racial harmony and several speakers praised the work being done at Spon Gate School as an example.
- Forming groups of people to scrub off racist graffiti from walls.
- Building up networks of people who can monitor the situation and provide support for black people.
- Talking to people in pubs, clubs, streets, offices and factories. One speaker mentioned that Rolls-Royce shop stewards were not prepared to produce leaflets supporting the anti-racist march in Coventry in May.
- Isolating fascists and racists, showing it is they who are out of place, not black people.
- Arranging multi-cultural events.
- Challenging the deep-rooted political and nationalist attitudes.
- Contributing to a memorial for Dr. Dharry who was stabbed to death in Broomfield Road on 7th June. One speaker suggested that all pubs, clubs and schools should organise collections towards the memorial.
- Making people aware that black people are not a burden, that they make their contribution to society, and showing that we live in a multi-racial society and that this is a good thing.

In general, there was agreement about the need to create a counter-atmosphere in the community for, as Raj said, "the racists will win, unless something is done". As a first positive step, a steering committee was formed to combat racism in the Earlsdon area, and we hope to bring you news of their activities in later issues. In the meantime if you would like to offer help in any way the committee can be contacted c/o 30 Coundon Road, Coventry.

## STAND FIRM AGAINST RACISM (continued)

Britain are the blacks, and the history of black people in Britain: the fact that blacks were cynically brought into Britain, mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, to do badly-paid and dirty jobs that white workers were no longer prepared to do. As well as having a much higher level of unemployment, many more black people (proportionally) still work in the lowest-paid jobs. It is clearly ridiculous to blame our present difficulties on those who are suffering most from them. The causes of unemployment lie in the general crisis affecting western countries and in government policy.

What we have to do is to mobilise all like-minded people - religious groups, political

groups, ethnic groups and their representatives, community organisations and local individuals - against racism. It is a tragedy that it has needed a murder to get a local anti-racist movement really started. But now it has started, it must not stop until racism has been stamped out in our area and throughout Coventry.

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Partridge at Earlsdon Library.

## Thank you

I would like to say thank you to the staff at the new Earlsdon Street Co-op store.

When I visited there the day after it opened I nearly fainted (because I am pregnant), but although the staff were very busy they took me behind the scenes to recover. This is much better treatment than I have had in a large city centre store in the past.

My compliments to the Co-op too for a wide range of products in an airy store - but I am sorry that so many good introductory offers have now stopped!

Mrs. Patricia A. Winder,  
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## Earlsdon New Diggers

Earlsdon New Diggers cultivate old people's gardens in the area to grow vegetables, giving a share of the produce to the residents. In this way fit people can obtain more space to grow their own food and people who cannot manage their gardens any more have a tidy and productive plot. However, two members of the group have left recently owing to other commitments so we need a couple of gardeners (or would-be gardeners) to join us. We are currently cultivating 11 gardens in the area and growing over 20 different fruit and vegetable crops.

If you are interested and would like to know more, please contact Graham Partridge at Earlsdon Library.

## 'NO MORE ROAD REPAIRS'

## 'Earlsdon Primary School to Close'

## 'MEALS-ON-WHEELS TO END'

E.C.H.O. has highlighted cuts in public expenditure and their effects before. And now councillors and officials have again had to spend time looking at a further set of cuts. This follows Secretary of State Michael Heseltine's charge that the City Council has been spending more than he says it should spend.

This area has never had very much from the City Council so in a sense there is not so much to be cut. However, the day care centre at Wistaria Lodge has been closed and the proposed declaration of urban renewal areas in Hearsall and Chapelfields has been postponed. Running repairs are not being done - e.g. Earlsdon roundabout clock and the fast-disappearing pedestrian crossing in Earlsdon Street - and outdoor recreation facilities are in decline as shown by the neglect of Spencer Park's tennis courts.

Across the city as a whole, previous cuts have meant, among other things, fewer books at schools and libraries, the closure of nurseries and further education facilities, delays in the opening of old people's homes and a serious reduction in the house-building and improvement programme. But soon, headlines like those above may be all too real; the City Council could be forced to close down some of its main services.

E.C.H.O. believes that the public sector is important to the quality of our lives and that major services will deteriorate if the Government's damaging economic policies force even more cuts.

BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR WHAT YOU THINK.  
PLEASE WRITE TO E.C.H.O. ABOUT THE CUTS.



## Youth Leader Retires

In 1956, St. Mary Magdalen's Church youth club was started under the leadership of Marjorie Simpson. On 30th April this year, at the age of 68, Mrs. Simpson retired after 25 years of leadership.

Her youth work began in Manchester, and continued after she moved to Sir Thomas White's Rd. in 1943. In 1949 she helped run the King's Messengers at the Church, a youth group which worked on projects to raise money for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The youth club was set up after Canon Rathbone had asked Mrs. Simpson to organise a country dancing display at the May Fayre. The girls stayed together forming the youth club, while a boys' youth club was set up by the assistant vicar Father Oliver; within a year the two clubs amalgamated.



Photo by N. Heydon-Dunblaton

Mrs. Simpson will, however, continue her active life at St. Mary Magdalen's. Along with worshipping there, she is a member of the Mothers' Union, Drama Group (of which she has been a member since it first started over 25 years ago), and the Social Committee, which she has been on for 30 years.

## Your local paper

A local resident has complained that we had not given coverage in our last issue to the fears of local residents about possible trouble at the Butts concert for racial harmony on 20th June. We would like to point out the following: Firstly, the concert was not announced until 27th May, by which time most of June's E.C.H.O. was written. By 2nd June E.C.H.O. was at the printers; on 3rd June the local press reported residents' fears. No-one had approached us to ask for our support. Please remember that since E.C.H.O. appears monthly it is very difficult to be absolutely up-to-date with the news. Secondly, E.C.H.O. is produced by busy people in their spare time. We do not have much time to go out seeking the news and to an extent depend on local people to give us information - after all, this is your local newspaper. In other words if you think E.C.H.O. should cover anything don't just expect it to happen. LET US KNOW, and we will see what we can do. People involved in this issue were:

Stuart Bailey	Graham Partridge
Alain Barbat	Barry K. Smith
Ann Groves	Andy Sutton
Niall McChesney	David Sutton
Angela Maton	Pat Winder

## HEARSALL ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY

Following their unsuccessful attempt to get the entry improvement scheme off the ground, the Society decided to undertake the tarmac'ing of a section of the entry at the back of Broomfield Road Post Office. This took place on 20th June and the idea was to see, and show others, how far a limited amount (2 tonnes) of tarmac would go.



Photo by Barry K. Smith

*The improved section of entry.*

The first of the Society's promised clean-up campaigns, using a skip for the rubbish, has been organised for 4th July, the venue being Collingwood Road. Anyone wishing to organise a clean-up campaign in their immediate area or wishing to help improve the environment in Hearsall should contact Jim King, 65 Broomfield Road, tel: 70842.

## EARLSDON C.N.D.

Earlsdon C.N.D. (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) has been very active in the last month. Their comprehensive exhibition 'Will Nuclear War Affect You?' was displayed at Earlsdon Methodist Church Hall on 6th June, then in the Chapel of Unity at Coventry Cathedral during the following week. A scaled down version was displayed at Earlsdon Library from 19th to 29th June.

About 120 people attended a fundraising concert on 12th June at the Technical College Refectory with Coventry bands Sedition, April 1st Movement and Steel Locks, while people packed the hall at Hearsall School on 16th June to see the anti-nuclear film 'The War Game'. The group also managed to do a small float in the Coventry Carnival!

If you are interested in joining the group or would like more details, please contact the secretary Nancy Reeves, 10 Poplar Road, tel: 711581.

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# SHOPPING

Jack and Doris Smith, directors of FANES NEWS-AGENTS, Earlsdon Street for the last 24 years, retired on 14th June. Both Coventry people (Doris was born in the Butts), they ran the Blue Chain greengrocers shop in Earlsdon St. for nine years before moving across the road.



*Mr. & Mrs. Smith with their paper boys & girls.*

They are clearly going to be greatly missed by their friends, neighbours, staff and customers - a constant stream of well-wishers were calling in, many with gifts, during their last few days in the shop. They are moving to Heswall in the Wirral, just ten minutes from the River Dee where Jack can pursue one of his main hobbies - fishing. Doris will be enjoying her spare time flower arranging and knitting, and the two of them plan to do a lot more exploring in their caravan. We wish them both a happy and healthy retirement.

We would like to welcome Mr. Jasper, who has taken over the business on behalf of Finlay and Company, the new owners.

+ + + +

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**126, Newcombe Road  
Coventry Tel: 72943**

ROBERT CARL HAIR STUDIO opened at 29 Earlsdon Street on 23rd June. It is run by Robert and Elaine, formerly artistic directors at the City Centre hair studio. They are looking for models at the moment for Monday mornings.

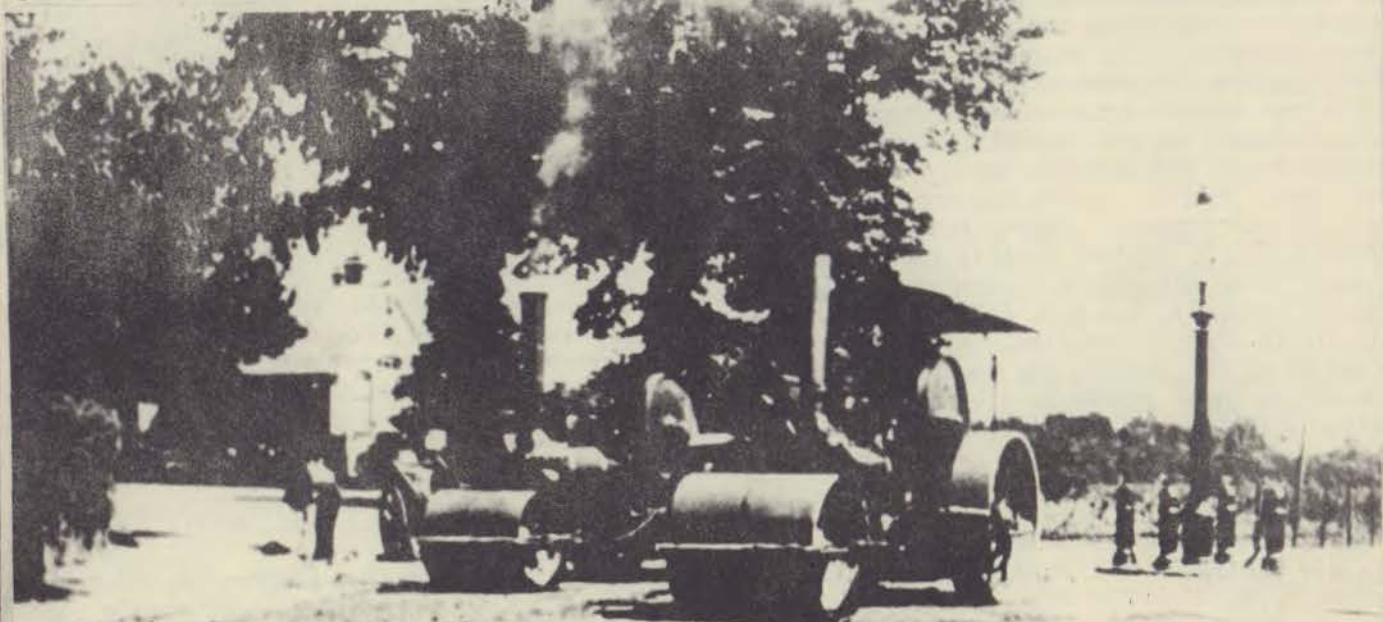
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A HEAT RECLAMATION CENTRE is due to open this month on the corner of Earlsdon Street and Moor Street in the former Co-op butchery. It will be run by the same firm as the Heating Centre in Albany Road but will concentrate not on sales for D.I.Y. enthusiasts but on working models etc. to show how heat reclamation systems (heat pumps, electronic controls, energy conservation techniques etc.) can work. The firm hope to have solar panels on the roof as a practical demonstration and will be doing installation work.

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A new CHINESE TAKE-AWAY, the Peking House, will be opening shortly in Broomfield Road in the former Whitmore's premises.

### OLD PHOTO



*Albany Road under construction about 1890. Note the single storey school building and the absence of the library.*